



# ***CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF WHEAT GROWERS***

---

1521 I Street · Sacramento, California 95814 · Phone (916)492-7066 · Fax (916)446-1063

May 15, 2005

The Honorable Bill Thomas  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  
By Fax

Dear Representative Thomas,

On behalf of the California Association of Wheat Growers, I am writing to urge your support for the pending trade agreement between the United States and the Central American region (DR-CAFTA.) This issue is of particular importance to California growers because of the positive benefits such an agreement holds for our industry.

The region is already a good customer for our wheat and the proposed agreement would improve the market potential even further. The national wheat group that markets wheat around the world, U.S. Wheat Associates, organized a trip to the region in March and California Wheat Commission Executive Director Bonnie Fernandez was on the delegation that visited the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Venezuela. Based on this trip and other market information, we believe that Central America and the Dominican Republic hold quite a bit of promise for the California wheat industry.

The Dominican Republic currently buys Desert Durum, which is used to make pasta. Desert Durum is produced in Southern California and Arizona and exported through U.S. Gulf ports. Guatemala and Costa Rica have the potential to purchase Hard Red, Hard White and durum produced in the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys. This wheat would be exported out of the Port of Stockton or the Port of Sacramento. Several fast food chains are expanding into the region and the demand for hamburger buns, breading for chicken, and other wheat flour items is growing.

Wheat buyers in each of these countries are sophisticated and creative. Whether they are looking to buy wheat to make local artisan bread, pasta, coatings, or one of their fastest growing wheat products, Asian-style noodles, California has the wheat to meet their needs. DR-CAFTA will help the region's economic development by creating jobs and opportunities for improving the overall standard of living. By lowering tariffs on U.S. wheat (see attachment), DR-CAFTA will give a competitive advantage to U.S. wheat growers. Especially given the fact that Mexico still bans California wheat (due to an unfair trade ban), California growers are looking for ways to expand their markets and increase their returns.

California produces wheat in virtually every county in the state, averaging eight hundred thousand metric tons on 650,000 acres. While not a huge crop by California standards, wheat has an annual farm gate value of \$96 million dollars and is an important rotation crop for our farmers.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. We look forward to hearing from you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janice Cooper". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Janice Cooper  
Executive Director